



# IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

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## NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **MEDICAID STAFF AND ASSISTED LIVING FACILITY OWNERS BEGIN WORK ON REBUILDING PROGRAM**

The fastest growing area of long term care in Idaho — residential assisted living facilities — is undergoing major changes that should help pave the way for growth and care of Idaho's rapidly increasing elderly population.

A coalition of residential assisted living facility owners, long term care providers, nurses, advocacy groups and Medicaid staff are now meeting to evaluate and propose changes to reshape the future of assisted living in Idaho.

"I can't stress enough the importance of what we're doing," says Debby Ransom, chief of Facility Standards, the Medicaid bureau that oversees long term care and related facilities in Idaho. "We're getting older as a nation and assisted living facilities have become a key part of providing care to the elderly."

A residential assisted living facility provides a home and assists people with daily living tasks. There are three levels of assisted living facilities, ranging from minimal assistance to extensive assistance with 24-hour care. All three levels of care require room, board and supervision.

There are 261 assisted living facilities in Idaho that provide homes for more than six thousand Idahoans, most of them elderly. The current rules regulating the facilities are 30 years old. "The process we have right now is no longer viable," says Randy May, deputy administrator for Medicaid. "The industry has grown so rapidly over the last few years, it has simply become impossible for us to meet needs."

Assisted living facility owners agree and asked Medicaid to update and clarify the rules. To accomplish that a 12-member coalition with ties to long term care was formed to help draft the changes. They began meeting in February with a goal of concluding their work by the end of May.

"This is a great opportunity to reshape and reconfigure the rules," says Jerry Mitchell, a committee member and owner of four assisted living facilities in eastern Idaho. "The (inspection) process has proven ineffective by the fact that we have so many rules and just add more and more to try to fix something."

The committee is charged with transforming the program rules and the licensing and inspection practice which became outdated with the rapid growth of assisted living facilities in Idaho. The results of the committee work will be given to an interim legislative committee for approval.

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**(Editors: For more information, contact Ross Mason at 208-334-0693.)**